

Evan's Frequency of Hand-Biting During a Six-Hour School Day

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Evan is a six-year-old autistic boy who is a student in a small school in Ireland. The school employs behaviour analytic principles and utilizes the Standard Celeration Chart to measure student progress. Evan engaged in a high rate of hand biting on a daily basis. Baseline measurements showed that Evan could bite his hand up to 154 times in the six-hour school day.

The school staff conducted a functional assessment on Evan's hand-biting behaviour to discover possible controlling functions. The results of the assessment identified a number of controlling variables. Evan would meet a number of "frustrating" situations throughout the school day that would occasion hand-biting behaviour. These were generally situations where he was told "No" or "Wait" in response to a demand, or where he encountered situations where he needed help and was unable to ask for it. The chart shows Evan's rate of hand-biting decelerated significantly once he was taught to ask for help when he met difficult situations. The frequency of hand-biting decelerated yet again when Evan was taught to accept the words "No" and "Wait."

Additional functional assessment identified a function whereby Evan would hand-bite in situations where he was excited (e.g., bouncing on the trampoline). The school staff set up "excited" situations where Evan was likely to hand-bite and taught him more appropriate ways to express excitement. This change resulted in further deceleration of Evan's hand-biting. The last data point on the chart shows a hand-biting frequency of 2 in a six-hour day.

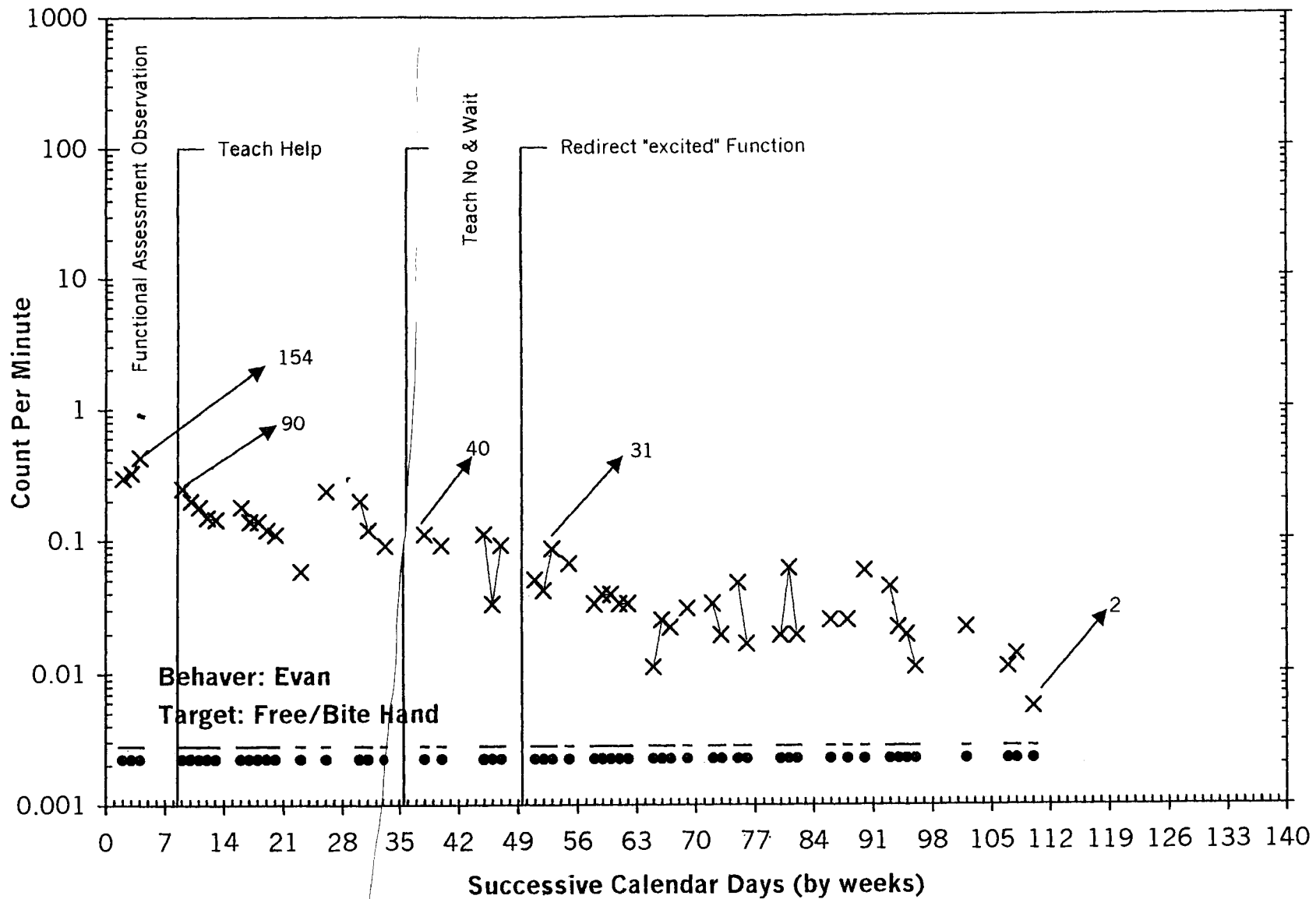


Figure 1